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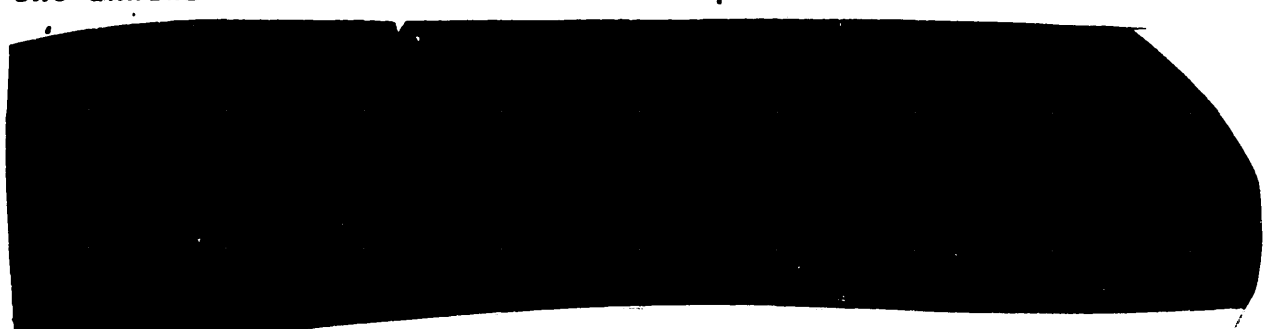
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Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech

On July 28 in Vladivostok, Gorbachev inter alia announced that by year's end six Soviet regiments - one tank, 3 air defense, and 2 motorized rifle regiments - would be withdrawn from Afghanistan

Gorbachev characterized the proposed withdrawal as "intended to hasten a political settlement" and called for a reciprocal step in the form of curtailment of outside interference.

This announcement has formed the centerpiece of a Soviet campaign to shift onus for lack of progress toward a political settlement away from themselves, put pressure on Pakistan and the US for some "reciprocal" gesture, and undercut support for the annual UNGA resolution.



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A Soviet press spokesman has hinted that these withdrawals might begin on or about October 6. Construction of reviewing stands at Shindand airbase and recent expeditious approval and issuance of entry visas to journalists to visit Kabul seems to confirm that some movement of troops is imminent and could occur during summit timeframe.

The troops withdrawal gesture appears to be militarily insignificant and part of a continuing Soviet effort to reshape its army in Afghanistan into a more effective anti-guerilla force.

Four of the six regiments -- 3 air defense, 1 tank -- have not been active in combat. The Afghan resistance clearly has no air force; the Soviets' sole remaining tank regiment has long been understrength and its tanks dispersed and largely employed in static defense roles where mortars and mines would be more appropriate.

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It is not yet clear whether the two motorized rifle regiments will be replaced in part or even in full. It is possible that there may be a partial withdrawal of older, less effective equipment even while new equipment enters the country elsewhere and overall troop levels remain basically unchanged.

[REDACTED] there has been a net introduction of two motorized rifle regiments for the purpose of a public withdrawal. Soviets may begin "withdrawals" during summit; or, issue of Soviet cheating might emerge. [REDACTED]

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The six regiments to be withdrawn are not militarily significant; the 3 air defense and 1 tank regiment have not been active in combat. Moreover, there is some indication that the MRR regiments have been introduced into Afghanistan for the purpose of a well-publicised withdrawal. Should this be the case, it cannot but adversely affect all US-USSR negotiations.

Afghanistan is a major obstacle in our relationship; the solution to the conflict is within Soviet control. If the Soviets persist in their occupation their costs will only increase. We will not abandon the Afghan people in their struggle for freedom.

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National Reconciliation:

Gorbachev in Vladivostok speech referred to the inclusion of political forces outside the boundaries of Afghanistan in a national reconciliation government.

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State of War

Despite adverse press which accompanied fall of resistance stronghold at Zhawar in April, the resistance is holding its own; recent successes in Herat, Kabul, Qandahar, and in the northeast, at Farkhar, testify to continued resistance resilience and ability to adapt to changing Soviet tactics.

Continued rocketing of Kabul, including the spectacular ammo dump explosion on August 26, indicate that mujahidin still able to penetrate Soviet security rings around major cities.

Soviets have intensified ambush and interdiction operations along Pak-Afghan border in effort to disrupt resistance supply lines. Although the effect has been to slow the resupply process and increase the cost of transportation, supplies continue to get through.

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